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ABSTRACT

This ethnography is about life in a small south Texas town painfully undergoing cultural and political change since the late 1960s. Since its inception, the Chicano civil rights movement has challenged local vestiges of racial segregation, and confrontation between Mexicanos and Anglos has created new tensions for the town's youth. This book examines how youth are changing a segregated social order and American society. It also explores how they learn a materialistic culture that is intensely competitive, individualistic, and unegalitarian. This "capitalist culture" of classist, racist, and sexist practices limits the impulse of the civil rights movement to create a more open democratic culture. High schools are sites for popular culture practices that stage or reproduce social inequality. Based on fieldwork in the early 1970s and subsequent periodic visits through 1987, this ethnography presents life in high school through the eyes of Mexican American and Anglo youth, portraying how they experience football, teachers, classroom activities, status groups, dating, and race relations. The final chapter revisits many former students as young adults; examines the upward social mobility of the Mexicano working class; and reflects on change and resistance to change in race relations, the role of communication and miscommunication in community life, and the need to rebuild a sense of community. Appendices include an essay "A Performance Theory of Cultural Reproduction and Resistance" that synthesizes Marxist class theory with ideas about communication from critical theory, symbolic interactionism, and sociolinguistics; field methods, narrative style, and hermeneutic interpretation; and data tables on social class and educational mobility. Contains 200 references and an index. (Author/SV)

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